

A historical black and white photograph showing a crowded ship deck. In the foreground, a wooden walkway with a rope railing runs diagonally across the frame. Below the railing, several pieces of laundry, including a long white sheet and a dark garment, are hanging on a line. A group of people, including women and children, are gathered around the laundry. In the background, a large group of passengers is visible on the upper deck, some leaning on the railing. The overall scene suggests a busy, crowded environment on a ship, likely during the early 20th century.

Twentieth Century Stories

Twentieth Century Stories

November 14, 2024–January 4, 2025

FORUM
GALLERY



Ernie Barnes

(1938–2009)

Born in Durham, North Carolina in 1938 at the height of the Jim Crow era, Ernest Eugene Barnes, Jr. (“Ernie”) is known for his paintings depicting Southern life and Black Joy in which he animated the lyricism of the human body at sport, work, and play. Barnes’ characters—stylized and sinuous—were expressive of the soul and spirit of the South described by the Artist as the “spiritual currency of the ghetto.” His neo-mannerist style was influenced by Italian masters and 20th Century American artists including Thomas Hart Benton, Andrew Wyeth and Charles White.

Ernie Barnes attended North Carolina College on a football scholarship, but he studied art. Drafted by the National Football League, Barnes played for six years before retiring in 1965 to concentrate on his art. In the 1970s, Barnes’ paintings became known across the country when his work was featured on the cover of Marvin Gaye’s 1976 album, *I Want You*, and in the credits of the groundbreaking television series, *Good Times*. His impact on popular culture has led the art of Ernie Barnes to become synonymous with contemporary African American creative expression for multi-generational audiences from all walks of life.

Created in 1972, *No Time for Church* was made at the time Barnes’ series *The Beauty of the Ghetto* embarked on a seven-year tour of major American cities hosted by dignitaries, athletes and celebrities. The series was Barnes’ response to the “Black is Beautiful” cultural movement of the 1960s and the iconic 1968 James Brown song, *Say it loud: I’m Black and I’m Proud*. His focus shifted towards the beauty and joy of mid-century Black Southern life at a time that dismissed the work of Black artists, and when Black culture was not represented in the pictures hanging in public collections. Barnes remarked, “I am providing a pictorial background for an understanding into the aesthetics of Black America. It is not a plea to people to continue to live there (in the ghetto) but for those who feel trapped, it is...a challenge of how beautiful life can be.” With the simple act of instilling his canvases with positivity, earnestness, striving, celebration and pride, Barnes’ depiction of Black life imparted a principled, even defiant, message accessible to all.

No Time for Church is a self-portrait portraying Barnes with eyes closed. Describing the symbolism of this expression, Barnes explained “...I began to see, observe, how blind we are to one another’s humanity. Blinded by a lot of things that have, perhaps, initiated feelings in that light. We don’t see into the depths of our interconnection. The gifts, the strength and potential within other human beings. We stop at color quite often. So one of the things we have to be aware of is who we are in order to have the capacity to like others. But when you cannot visualize the offerings of another human being you’re obviously not looking at the human being with open eyes.”

Legendary film actor Burt Lancaster (1913-1994) was the first owner of *No Time for Church*, acquiring the work in the year it was made. Lancaster gifted the painting to screenwriter and frequent collaborator Roland Kibbee (1914-1984) and his wife Lucille Meredith Kibbee. Together with Lancaster, Roland Kibbee notably worked on films including *The Crimson Pirate* (1952), *Vera Cruz* (1954), *The Devil’s Disciple* (1959), and *Valdez Is Coming* (1971). Earlier in his career, Kibbee was a radio writer, with impressive credits that included *The Fred Allen Show* and *The Groucho Marx Show*.

Both Lancaster and Kibbee had social progressive backgrounds, and Kibbee was named as a Communist by several witnesses before the House Unamerican Activities Committee in the early 1950s. Forced to testify (or lose his livelihood), Kibbee reluctantly appeared, and later said he named only those that had named him. He retained his friendship and association with Lancaster, who was a vocal critic of the Committee and its effect on the business of Hollywood.



ERNIE BARNES

No Time for Church, 1972

acrylic on canvas

18 x 14 inches

signed lower right “*ERNIE BARNES*”

Provenance

The Artist

Collection of Burt Lancaster, 1972

Roland Kibbee and Lucille Meredith Kibbee

(gift from the above)

Jefferson Kibbee

(by descent)

The Estate of Ernie Barnes

Private Collection, Rye, New York

(purchased from the above)

In high school, Ernie Barnes found a mentor in his high school masonry teacher, a weightlifting coach and former athlete, who encouraged the emerging talent he observed in Ernie's drawings. Barnes became an accomplished athlete in college and, after graduation was drafted by the National Football League playing for the Baltimore Colts, Titans of New York, Denver Broncos, and Canadian Football League.

After six years playing in the National Football League, Barnes retired in 1965 to concentrate on his art. In his lifetime, Barnes credited his years as an athlete and advice from his college art instructor Ed Wilson with helping him understand the importance of painting from his own life experiences. Barnes acknowledged Wilson saying, "He told me to pay attention to what my body felt like in movement. Within that elongation, there's a feeling, an attitude and expression. I hate to think had I not played sports what my work would look like."

Shortly after his final football game and with the endorsement of San Diego Chargers owner Barron Hilton, Barnes crashed the 1965 American Football League owners' meeting in Houston to make a pitch to become the first official painter of a professional sports franchise. New York Jets owner Sonny Werblin was impressed with Barnes as an artist and person and offered to pay him a player's salary to become the team's official painter. Sooner after, Werblin financed the transportation of Barnes' paintings to New York and brought three art critics to view them, who agreed that Barnes was "the most expressive painter of sports since George Bellows." Soon thereafter in November 1966, Grand Central Art Galleries in New York debuted Barnes' first solo exhibition, which was critically acclaimed and rapidly sold out.

His experiences as an athlete served as rich fodder for Barnes' subject matter, and he later received two Sports Artist of the Year awards in 1984 and 1985. In addition, Barnes was commissioned to produce paintings for the Los Angeles Olympic Committee (1984), the Los Angeles Lakers basketball team (1987), and the Carolina Panthers football team (1996).

In 1996, the National Basketball Association commissioned Barnes to create a work for its 50th Anniversary on the theme "Where we were, where we are, and where we are going." Barnes' answer to the challenge was *The Dream Unfolds* which hangs in the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame in Springfield, Massachusetts. The graphite and acrylic work, *Study for The Dream Unfolds*, was created in preparation for the commission, and features the last names of notable NBA players, such as Elgin Baylor, Julius Erving, Larry Bird, Magic Johnson and Michael Jordan.

ERNIE BARNES

Study for The Dream Unfolds, 1995

graphite and acrylic on paper

37 7/8 x 25 3/8 inches

inscribed and signed lower right

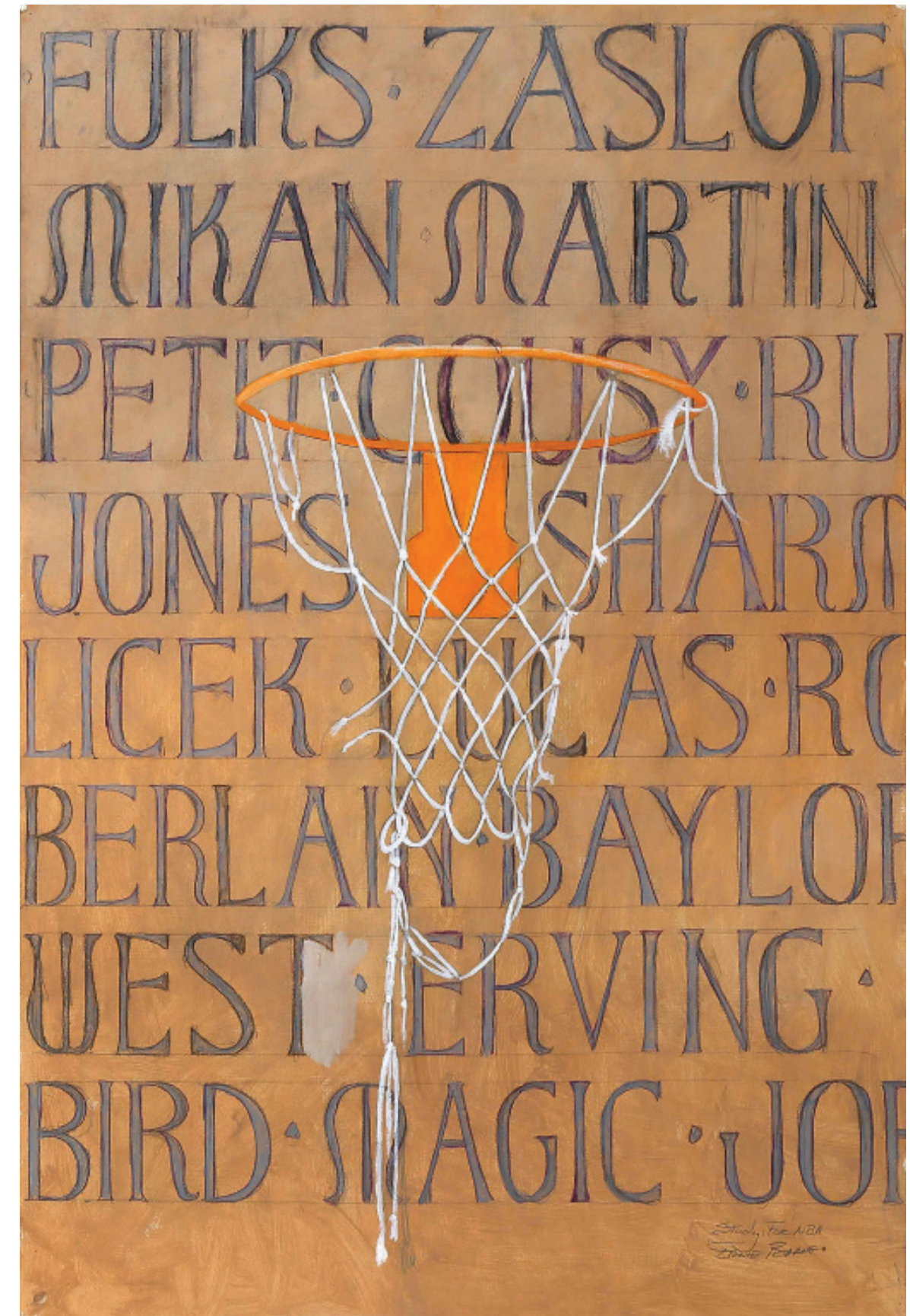
"Study: For NBA / Ernie Barnes"

Provenance

The Artist

The Estate of Ernie Barnes

Private Collection, Rye, New York





Davis Cone

(b. 1950)

Considered one of the masters of Twentieth Century Photorealism, Davis Cone (b.1950) has devoted his practice to the chronicling of the Art Deco movie theatres of America. Cone captures these “popcorn palaces” in cities and suburban settings at various times of day, from a range of angles and in different weather systems and lighting, paying particular homage to the neon lights and architectural grandeur of his subjects. A native of Augusta, Georgia, Davis Cone began exhibiting regionally in 1977.

Davis Cone’s first one-person exhibition was at O.K. Harris Works of Art in New York in 1979; numerous solo New York exhibitions have followed. Cone’s first museum show, *Theatre Paintings 1977-1983* was organized by the Georgia Museum of Art (Athens), traveling to the Hunter Museum of Art (Chattanooga, TN). Davis Cone was included in the landmark exhibition *Contemporary American Realism since 1960*, organized by the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, touring to venues in the United States, Portugal, Spain and Germany from 1981-83. Since this time, Cone’s work has appeared in many museum exhibitions, including the 2014 show *Photorealism: The Sydney & Walda Besthoff Collection* presented at the New Orleans Museum of Art.

Davis Cone’s paintings can be found in virtually every important collection of American representational art. His art has been the subject of two published books, *Hollywood on Main Street* by Linda Chase (The Overlook Press, 1988) and *Popcorn Palaces: The Art Deco Theatre Paintings of Davis Cone* by Michael Kinerk and Dennis Wilhelm (Harry N. Abrams Inc., 2001).

Early in his career, Davis Cone fused his love of photography and painting into an artistic means of expression, just as he ultimately consolidated his passions for Art Deco and historic American movie theaters into a singular topic for representation. He grew up in small-town America during a time when regularly attending movies at the local theater had not yet been eclipsed by television, sporting events, and other newfound national pastimes. The focalized theater, not the sprawling shopping mall, was still America’s secular meeting place, just as the “piazza” (town square) continues to represent such a venue in old-world European towns. The glowing theater marquee, faithfully illuminated in the evenings, offered hope to a suffering pre-War population and community to a post-War nation. It also bestowed unto middle America a touch of glamor. Moreover, the theaters continue to represent the personal friendships, social interdependence, and human values which Davis Cone recalls from childhood and which he perpetually seeks to keep alive in his own life.

While he has painted big city theaters, such as the Metro in New York and Radio City itself, the Chicago Theatre, and the El Rey along Miracle Mile in Los Angeles, his documentary homage rests with the small-town, lesser-known theaters, a number of which have been torn down since his photography and paintings of them.

In Cone's 1994 painting of the *Forum* in Metuchen, New Jersey, he places the theater at the center of the composition, the undulating marquee details of its budding Deco forms shining bright in a cloudless day. Three vintage station-wagons line the narrow, East Coast street, one parked directly in front of the theater where a young man idly sits on the sidewalk. The marquee gives away the scene's time in history with the billing of current movies on view. So vivid is the setting that the viewer can immediately identify the time of year reflected: in this case late Summer when one is still bathed in the glow of a warm sun while the Fall foliage has already begun.

Also found in *Forum* is the artist's unconventional way of signing and dating his paintings, which for a bit always seems to elude the onlooker. Like Nineteenth Century American landscape painters whose rapport with their subject matter inspired them to incorporate their names within the compositions themselves, so Davis' autographs appear in the license plate of a passing vehicle, in an unobtrusive street sign or, as in *Forum*, in the lower portion of a calendar listing in the theater's window.



DAVIS CONE

Forum, 1994

acrylic on canvas

25 x 43 inches

signed and dated center

"Davis / Cone/ 1994"

Provenance

The Artist

OK Harris Gallery, New York

Private Collection, Los Angeles

Forum Gallery, New York



Philip Evergood

(1901–1973)

Philip Evergood was born Philip Howard Blashki in New York City in 1901. His father, Miles Evergood Blashki, an Australian poet and artist of Polish descent, changed the family name to simply “Evergood” soon thereafter in an effort to disassociate from the “foreign” sounding last name. Following his upbringing in New York, his British mother campaigned for the young Philip’s education to be conducted in England, where he attended the boarding school Eton, and then Cambridge University. During the years of the First World War, Evergood began to develop an interest for imaginative depictions of biblical scenes and historical battles. He went on to develop his art studies at London’s Slade School of Art before returning to New York to study at the Art Students League with George Luks and William von Schlegell and then to Paris to attend the Académie Julian briefly where he studied with André Lhote.

On his homecoming to New York in 1931, Evergood found an America reeling from the Great Depression. He was aghast at the poverty and the physical and emotional distress he witnessed, and his painting style changed accordingly. Though tempered by fantasy, wry humor, and an obscure personal symbolism, social criticism characterizes what today is regarded as his most significant work. Evergood’s typical themes include political oppression, racial discrimination, coarse life among the urban poor, and the mundane amusements of people uninspired or oblivious to nobler pursuits.

In the 1930s, Evergood became close friends with social realist painter John Sloan, who was instrumental in helping Evergood launch his career. He soon won the recognition of collector Joseph H. Hirshhorn, who purchased several of his paintings, and following Sloan’s introduction to Juliana Force, director of the Whitney Studio Club and regional director of the Public Works of Art Project, Evergood was assigned to work on various WPA mural projects from 1934 to 1937. However, with his connection to leftist organizations, and his focus on labor themes, Evergood gained notoriety and much of his work stirred up controversy.

Philip Evergood viewed his background as a detriment to his success. He believed that his Eton and Cambridge education miscast him as an effete intellectual, a role at odds with his political commitment and his work. He adopted a style of simplicity and clarity as a means of expressing his social intent, which often involved a naïve stance. Evergood's *Innocent Abroad*, painted in 1938, conjures pacifist themes in the image of a young boy with large incredulous eyes grasping a gas mask, the exaggerated features serving Evergood's pointed view of morally depraved world.

During his lifetime, Evergood was criticized for obscenity and indecency, barred from national service because of his participation in peace demonstrations, and accused of disloyalty by the House Un-American Activities Committee. He used his work as a forum for social conscience to support class struggle and to criticize the inconsistencies in their societies. In his paintings, Evergood depicted scenes with a biting eloquence, and, as in *Innocent Abroad*, he often incorporated children as hopeful signs for the future in works that still resound as they did when they were created.

Works by Philip Evergood are included in many important museum collections, including the Brooklyn Museum of Art, Museum of Modern Art, Metropolitan Museum of Art and Whitney Museum of American Art in New York; the Smithsonian Museums in Washington, D.C.; the Columbus Museum of Art in Ohio; the Tate Gallery in London; and the Vatican Museum in Vatican City, Italy.

PHILIP EVERGOOD

Innocent Abroad, 1938

oil on canvas

10 7/8 x 8 1/2 inches

signed and titled verso

"EVERGOOD / *Innocent Abroad*"

Provenance

The Artist

Collection of Bella Fishko, New York

Forum Gallery, New York



Philip Evergood completed *M.T. Florinsky, D.S. Mirsky, and the Pidget*, in the summer of 1928, a year after the Artist's first solo exhibition at the Dudensing Galleries in New York. The subjects of this work are two prominent scholars and authors of Russian history. D.S. Mirsky wrote several books on history and literary criticism including the *History of Russian Literature* (1926) and *The Intelligentsia of Great Britain* (1935). Dr. Florinsky wrote more than a dozen books, including the notable two volume publication, involving a decade of research, *Russia: A History and An Interpretation*, 1953.

Evergood painted this fanciful double portrait of the two men while upstate in Woodstock, and it is viewed by critics as a departure from his early work which showed the heavy influence of El Greco and Cézanne. This painting is described by John I. H. Baur in the monograph, *Philip Evergood*, published by Abrams in 1975:

The two Russian emigres, so different in appearance and...in their views, sit on a magic carpet, while behind them are spread the symbols of their past in imperial Russia. Among other things, they are discussing a dream of Florinsky's in which he encountered a strange animal, half pigeon, half rabbit. While they are talking, the Pidget himself materializes and joins the conversation. Although the picture was enlarged at a much later date, and the feet then added, the central portion remains virtually unchanged and shows that naïve directness of drawing and characterization that was to become a hallmark of Evergood's mature work. The fantasy of the whole concept also forecasts another element in his art which was not to develop fully for several years...

M.T. Florinsky, D.S. Mirsky, and the Pidget was included in the retrospective exhibition, *Philip Evergood*, organized in 1960 by the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. The exhibition traveled to Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN; Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, CT; Des Moines Art Center, Des Moines, IA; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, CA; Colorado Springs Fine Art Center, CO; Munson-Williams Proctor Institute, Utica, NY.



PHILIP EVERGOOD

M.T. Florinsky, D.S. Mirsky, and the Pidget, 1928
oil on canvas laid down on panel
40 ¼ x 50 ¼ inches
signed and dated lower right
"Philip Evergood 1928"

Provenance

The Artist
Collection of Michael T. Florinsky, New York and
Vevey, Switzerland
Collection of Robert Anthoine
(and thence by descent)
Private Collection, Australia



César Galicia

(b. 1957)

Renowned for his “greater than life” or “more than real paintings,” César Galicia, a native and resident of Spain, has been referred to as a “sensation of contemporary trompe l’oeil.” Championed for his illuminating renderings of what are seemingly ordinary objects—toys, public telephones, air pumps, motorcycles—Galicia’s subjects are always painted from life and never from photographs. In this way, they serve as deeply absorbing and fascinating portraits of contemporary life.

In each of his paintings, Galicia employs the traditional study of “things natural,” reconstructing his subjects in a process which goes from the inside to the outside (he even paints the interiors of devices which will never be seen, as they are hidden by their covers), leading him to a concept of reality in its extreme. Putting into operation both the visual appearances of his subjects and the knowledge we have of them, the effect on the viewer and the surprise of a visual reality in paint is pure César Galicia virtuosity. The Artist has taken the craft of painting to its limits, his works have become fantastic and nearly real. Drawing on the experiences he had during his years in New York as well as life in his native Spain, César Galicia has developed an urban mysticism in which beauty explodes on each graffiti-covered wall.

In *Telephone*, César Galicia returns to a subject that has captured his fascination since the 1980s. The wall-mounted payphone with its rotary dial and wired tether, has ceased to be a device for communication and seems more of an ancient artifact to be admired for its strange beauty. The weathered, pockmarked and stained walls of *Telephone* are inscribed with vertical and horizontal intersecting lines and near perfect circles, a recurring element. And a yellowed 1967 auto advertisement by Editorial Bruguera is painted in perfect trompe l'oeil as if its weathered edges have come unstuck from aging adhesive.

Author Pablo Jiménez describes how such still life paintings by Galicia are “the portrait of an object” that has been “taken out of its habitual existence and brought to the art laboratory.”¹ Yet, from our vantage point in the future, with computers in our pockets to access limitless information and the ability to instantly connect with anyone, anywhere on the planet, it cannot be forgotten that the invention of the telephone was a revelation in global communications and truly revolutionized the Twentieth Century, democratizing the choice of where to live, the way we conduct business, and the way we socialize. Galicia’s *Telephone* then becomes an object of reverence and an icon of a century that witnessed technological development like none other before it.

1 Jiménez, Pablo. *César Galicia: Por La Cara Norte (The North Face)*, Ediciones Sinsentido, Madrid, 2003, p. 65

CÉSAR GALICIA

Telephone, 2012

mixed media on board

36 ¼ x 25 ¼ inches

signed middle right “César Galicia”

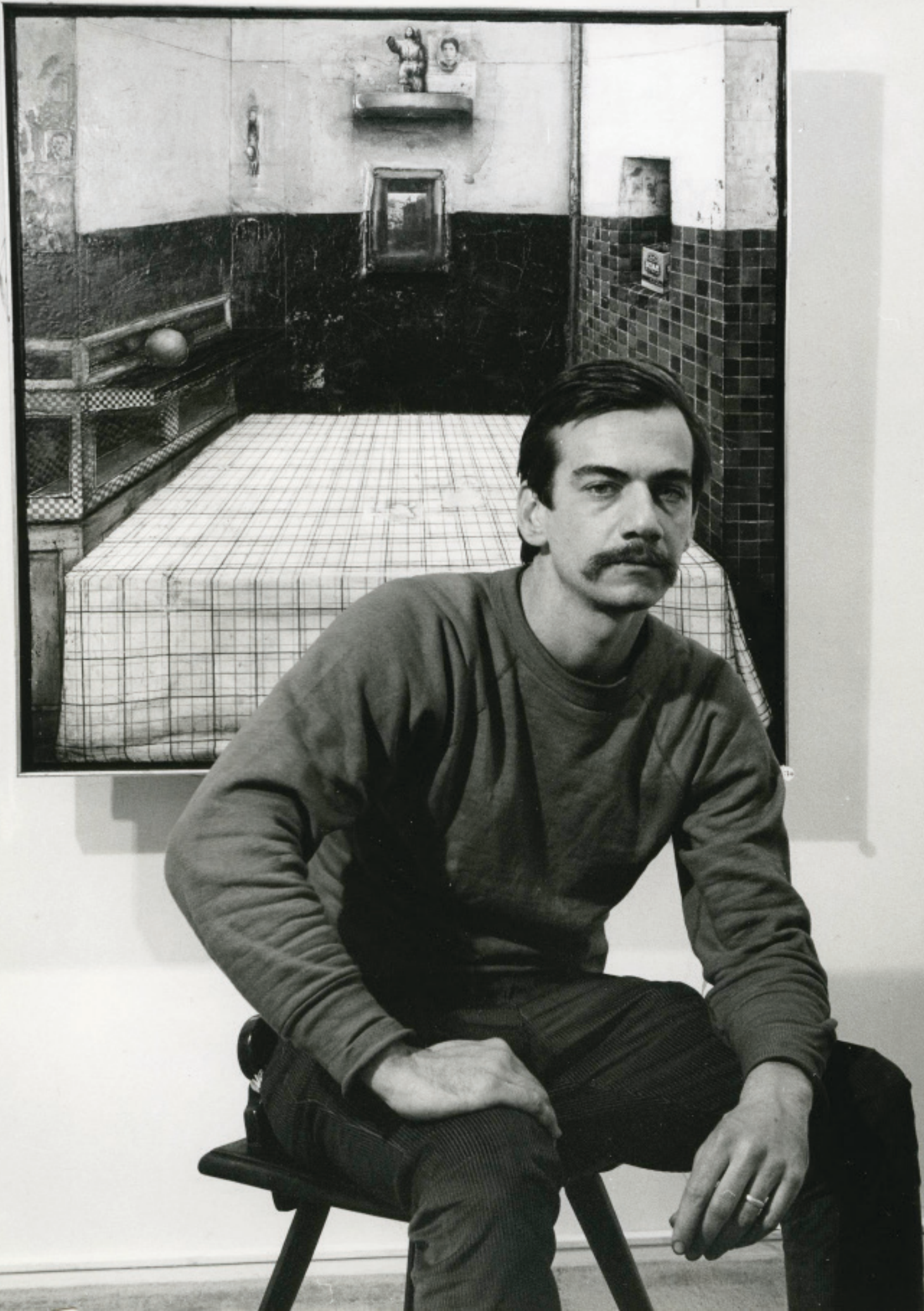
Provenance

The Artist

(Forum Gallery, New York)

Private Collection, Philadelphia





Gregory Gillespie

(1936–2000)

Gregory Gillespie was born in New Jersey, studied at New York's Cooper Union (1954-60), then at the San Francisco Art Institute where he earned his MFA in 1963. It was soon apparent he would not follow in the footsteps of New York's Abstract Expressionists nor in those of the Bay Area Figurative painters, but that his art would always remain fully individualist, highly personal, and outside the parameters of the critical mainstream. Some saw his artistry as the contrivance of an art world contrarian; others recognized that Gregory was painstakingly progressing through his own personal demons and, in so doing, flabbergasting an attentive audience with the painterly results. Estrangement, entrapment, isolation, anxiety, repression, guilt, violence, and a heightened, even pornographic sexuality, consumed his Italian period work and divulged his psychic pain.

As the United States intensified its involvement in the war in Vietnam, Gregory Gillespie landed in Rome as the recipient of a Chester Dale Fellowship and a Fulbright Grant. His grant project was to study the work of the early Renaissance master Masaccio, however, it is fitting that he was most captivated by that of Carlo Crivelli, a mid-to-late 15th century painter with an intense, haunting neo-Gothic sensibility. Gillespie commented of Crivelli that he was one of the few artists skillful enough to seamlessly incorporate sculptural elements with those of painting, and to do so deftly enough to mask what one perceives as reality versus illusion. Such was the schizophrenic sphere of contradictions which Gregory Gillespie sought and succeeded in occupying.

No painters of the decade came close to Gillespie's graphic nature and explicit scenes. A small coterie of 1960s Italian filmmakers, however, shared his capacity to transform life observed into the hallucinatory. Like Gregory, these independent, outsider artists were interfacing with reality and sanity.

Although it is doubtful that Gregory Gillespie knew them personally, he may well have seen the controversial work they produced, precisely concurrent with his own: Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Theorem* (1968) in which an enigmatic male visitor has consensual sex with every member of a bourgeois Italian family before disappearing; Liliana Cavani's *Year of the Cannibals* (1969) where the streets of Milan are laden with the corpses of ill-defined state enemies while indifferent pedestrians walk past; and Michelangelo Antonioni's *Blowup* (1966), an existential mystery thriller whose bizarre, unrelated events terminate in a mimed tennis match with imaginary rackets and ball, the protagonist dematerializing just as the sound of the ball becomes audible. Although Gillespie did bring his phantasmagoric universe back with him to the United States (to rural Massachusetts), never was it so potent as in his Roman days of the mid to late 1960s.

During these formative years, Gillespie painted a series of interiors of Italian kitchens and trattorias. His so-called “shrine” paintings carried the emotional weight of religious or sacred spaces. Although he had left the Catholic Church of his youth, Gillespie described how he “rejected all religious doctrines and became free of them” intellectually, but how “emotionally there’s still a twenty-year impact on your feelings and on the way your mind works unconsciously—repression, and fears, and guilt.”

Watching the Vietnam war unfold from abroad, Gillespie must have been deeply affected by the shocking reports of the violent conflict and civil unrest that resulted. His response in 1966 was to create *Fragment (Vietnam Shrine)*, in which the pinnacle of human suffering presented goes far beyond the contemplative nature of the isolated spaces of Gillespie’s interiors. That the subject is an African American man broadens the context of the work further to become a commentary on the disproportionate effect of wartime upon underprivileged and poor communities. The violence of *Fragment (Vietnam Shrine)* is transformed by Gillespie into a reliquary for modern times, a relic of life and against war to be revered and honored.

Unlike any artwork done previously or since, the rawness and brilliance of Gillespie’s work remains a mystery to the mentally sound. Ultimately, Gregory was overpowered by his demons and took his own life on April 26, 2000.



Carlo Crivelli, *Saint Peter of Verona (Peter Martyr)*, circa 1475
(coll. National Gallery, London)



Pier Paolo Pasolini, film-clip from his *Teorema (Theorem)*, 1968

GREGORY GILLESPIE

Fragment (Vietnam Shrine), 1966

mixed media

25 x 19 x 4 ½ inches

signed verso “GG”

Provenance

The Artist

Myrna and Norman Katz, Sharon, Massachusetts

Private Collection, Australia





George Grosz

(1936–2000)

George Grosz was an ideologically committed artist, an agitator who used his art as a weapon in the convulsed Germany of the early twentieth century. Grosz was a prominent member of the Berlin Dada from 1918 to 1920, creating mordantly satirical collages, and was associated with the New Objectivity group during the Weimar Republic (1919-1933). His caustic, caricatured studies of corrupt officers, war profiteers, exploitative industrialists and prostitutes led to his persecution by the German government. Relentless in his criticism of the Nazis and their burgeoning authoritarian dictatorship, Grosz's artwork was included in the infamous Degenerate Art Exhibition in Munich 1937, and he was declared an "enemy of the state" by the Nazis who confiscated his works in German museums, destroying some.

As Hitler proclaimed electoral victory and was instated as Chancellor of Germany in January 1933, Grosz narrowly escaped by emigrating to New York that same month. He became a citizen of the United States of America in 1938.

Today, there is a permanent museum for his work in Berlin, and he is revered as one of the greatest of German artists of the period, including Max Beckmann and Otto Dix.

The first owner of *Berlin Street Scene*, 1930, was the important German author and playwright, Ulrich Becher (1910-1990). Becher was a schoolmate, close friend and pupil of George Grosz whose first published book (1932) was victim to the Nazi book burnings in 1933. Like Grosz' drawings and paintings, Becher's written works were denounced by the Nazis as "degenerate" and in need of being expunged. Becher was already in exile, having fled Germany after the Reichstag fire in early 1933. Becher took a more circuitous route than his compatriot George Grosz, going from Germany to Austria, Switzerland and Brazil by way of Portugal before settling in New York City in 1944. His *New Yorker Novellen*, published 1950, was dedicated to George Grosz.

George Grosz and Ulrich Becher were ostracized artists whose works were publicly "burned", both figuratively and, in Becher's case, literally, in Germany. Both men were forced to emigrate and carve out a new existence in exile, shaping their lives and art. Becher returned to Europe in 1948 and settled in Basel, Switzerland until his death in 1990. Grosz remained in the U.S. and returned to Berlin one month before his death in 1959.



GEORGE GROSZ

Berlin Street Scene, 1930

watercolor

22 x 23 ½ inches

signed and dated lower right "Grosz / 30"

Provenance

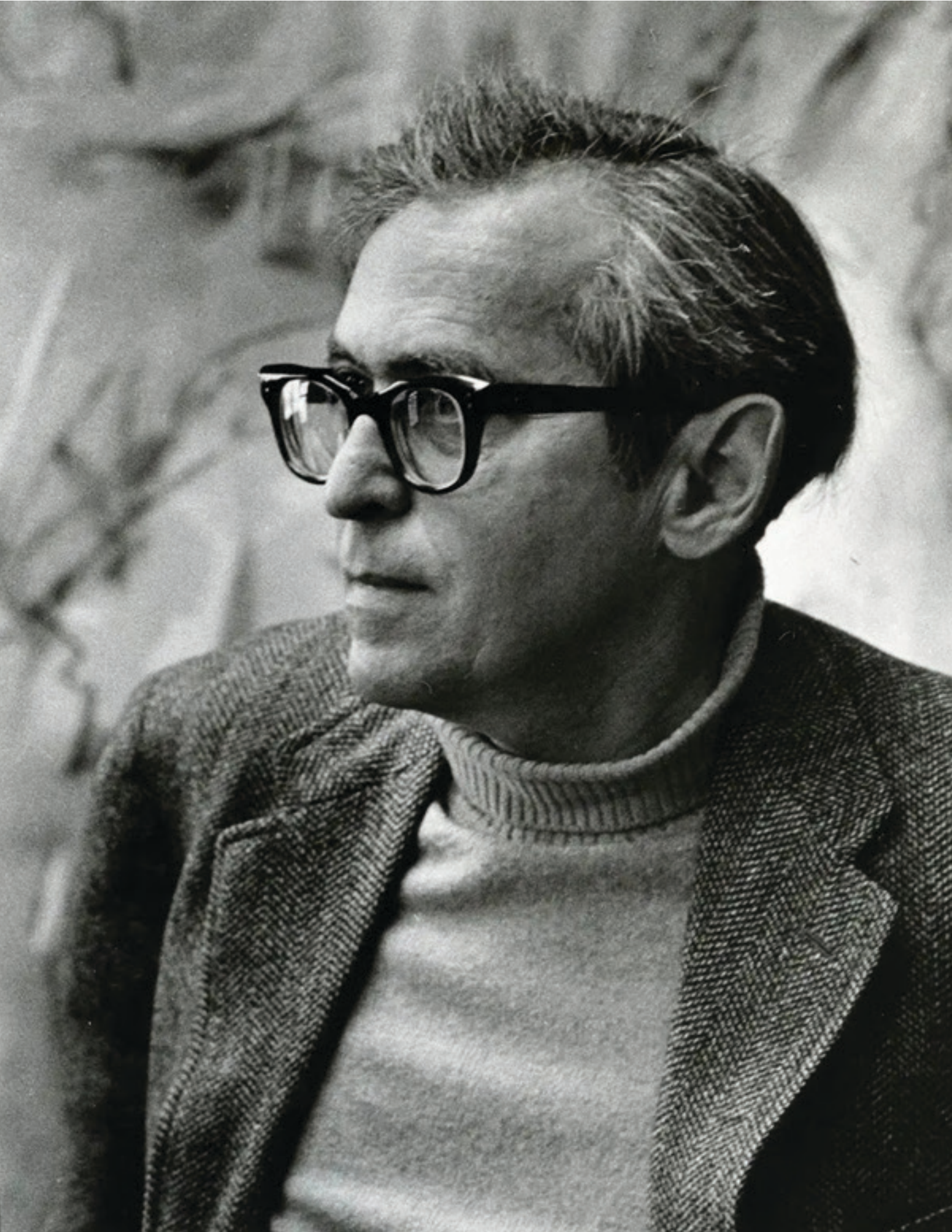
The Artist

Collection of Ulrich Becher, Germany

Private Collection, New York

Forum Gallery, New York

Ralph Jentsch, author of the George Grosz Catalogue Raisonné, has kindly confirmed the authenticity of this work.



Jack Levine

(1915–2010)

Jack Levine was born in Boston's South End slums in 1915. He began drawing at the age of eight at the community art center as did his friend Hyman Bloom, who would also go on to be a well-known artist. By 1929, Levine was studying with Dr. Denman Ross of the Fogg Art Museum at Harvard. In 1935, Levine became employed as an artist in the Work Progress Administration (WPA). This endeavor supported him through the Depression; the vignettes of street life at that time filled his mind and would appear on his canvases as biting social commentary for the rest of his life.

Jack Levine's *The Feast of Reason*, 1937, was created for the WPA and catapulted the artist into national prominence when it was acquired by The Museum of Modern Art. Levine was only 23 years old at the time. In 1939, he had the first of 3 one-person exhibitions at New York's legendary Downtown Gallery owned by Edith Halpert.

Jack Levine's social satire reflected the frustrations and injustices of the 1930's. Many of his best paintings embodied his hatred of war, inequality and the hypocritical aspects of our society, thereby securing his position as one of America's greatest social realists.

Moving to the Alan Gallery in 1953, he continued his satirical direction with the completion of *The Gangsters Funeral*, 1952-53, oil on canvas, purchased by the Whitney Museum of American Art. After his second exhibition at the Alan Gallery, Levine began work on *1932 (In Memory of George Grosz)*. The painting became the centerpiece of his next exhibition at the gallery in December 1959.

1932 (In Memory of George Grosz) is one of a small number of Jack Levine's works relating to Nazism. When asked about these works Levine said:

I think an artist should paint his life, and I try to and I am a social realist painter to the degree that society or the body politic impinges on my life. The gas ovens were too horrible for me to face. Now, with Hitler and Hindenburg that was an aspect I could face. Somebody showed me a book about Germany, and a line caught my eye about Hindenburg being a giant of a man and that set me off.

In my painting, the senile stupid figure of President Hindenburg is handing over the baton of power to Hitler, a creepy little man with an expression like the face of a shark. (Hitler is named chancellor of Germany in 1933). Hannah Arendt's phrase 'the banality of evil' applies here. The figure on the left behind Hindenburg, rubbing his hands together in anticipation, could be Franz von Papen who was instrumental in this particular chapter of Hitler's rise to power. I painted the background as a military museum. Up on a

pedestal right behind Hindenburg is an equestrian figure in full armor, including an emblazed shield and the windows are Gothic.

The title was an afterthought. George Grosz, who was one of the few 20th century artists who I admired, had just died; and as he had frequently chosen to attack the perversity of German fascism through his art, I thought it would be a fitting tribute. (George Grosz had come to New York to teach at the Arts Student League in the Summer of 1932.)

Jack Levine takes this episode from history and invests it with theatrical drama, inviting the viewer to witness the chilling picture of Hitler bowing to Hindenburg as he assumes power.

1932 (*In Memory of George Grosz*) was purchased from the Alan Gallery exhibition in 1960 by the award-winning author and screenwriter, Dalton Trumbo. A decade earlier, Trumbo and nine colleagues refused to testify before Congress regarding their suspected Communist ties and became known as the “Hollywood Ten.” Dalton Trumbo was fined, imprisoned, and blacklisted for more than ten years; he wrote 30 scripts under pseudonyms. In 1960 *The New York Times* carried the story that Otto Preminger had hired Dalton Trumbo to write the script for *Exodus*. The same year, Kirk Douglas announced in *Variety* that Trumbo had written the script for *Spartacus* under an assumed name. It is against these extraordinary events that Dalton Trumbo bought this painting and held it until he died in 1976.

Writing for *The New Yorker* in 2007, actor and comedian Steve Martin tells the story of his experience seeing the works of art in the collection of Dalton Trumbo in an article titled “In the Bird Cage: Finding Out What Funny Is” published in the October issue:

The Trumbo house was modern, built on a hillside, and extended down three floors into a ravine. The walls in the living room gave me my most vivid memory of the house, for they were covered with art. I had never seen real paintings in a house, and this might have been where my own inclination toward owning pictures began. In the dining room was a William Gropper, depicting members of the House Un-American Activities Committee grotesquely outlined in fluorescent green against a murky background. There was a Raphael Soyer, a Moses Soyer and a Jack Levine painting of Hindenburg making Hitler chancellor. These artists are obscure today but not forgotten. Gropper’s art depicted politicians as porcine bullies, and Jack Levine’s well-brushed social realism had a biting edge that fit the politics of the family perfectly.

JACK LEVINE

1932 (*In Memory of George Grosz*), 1959

oil on canvas

64 x 56 inches

signed lower left “J Levine”

signed and inscribed verso

“Jack Levine / 2 West 15th Street”

Provenance

The Artist

(The Alan Gallery, New York)

Mr. and Mrs. Dalton Trumbo, Los Angeles

(Greer Gallery, New York, c.1977)

Mr. and Mrs. Robert M. Topol, Mamaroneck, NY, c.1977

Private Collection, Harrison, NY (by descent)





Louis Lozowick

(1892–1973)

Born in Ludvinovka in the Ukraine, Louis Lozowick is remembered for the richly tonal, evocative lithographs of skyscrapers, machinery, and civil and industrial constructions he created in his lifetime, a series spanning fifty years.

Lozowick attended the Kiev Art School from 1904 to 1906 before immigrating to the United States at age 14. In New York, he studied for three years at the National Academy of Design with Leon Kroll, attended Ohio State University and, between 1919 and 1924 he traveled extensively throughout Europe, particularly Paris, Berlin, and Russia. During his time in Berlin, Lozowick learned lithography and quickly became one of the city's most highly regarded young artists most noted for his lithographs of American cities that embodied the essence of the Machine Age. Fascinated by the technical and industrial achievements of the United States, European audiences admired Lozowick's interpretations of the geometric architecture of modern urbanity—skyscrapers, smokestacks, elevated trains, and bridges of America.

From his experiences in Europe, Lozowick wrote and published a monograph on Russian Constructivism entitled *Modern Russian Art* and, once he returned to the United States, he created illustrations for the social reform periodical *New Masses*. He also translated for *Broom Magazine*, an international magazine of the arts that was first printed in Rome, then in Berlin, with the intention of bringing new avant-garde art back to America.

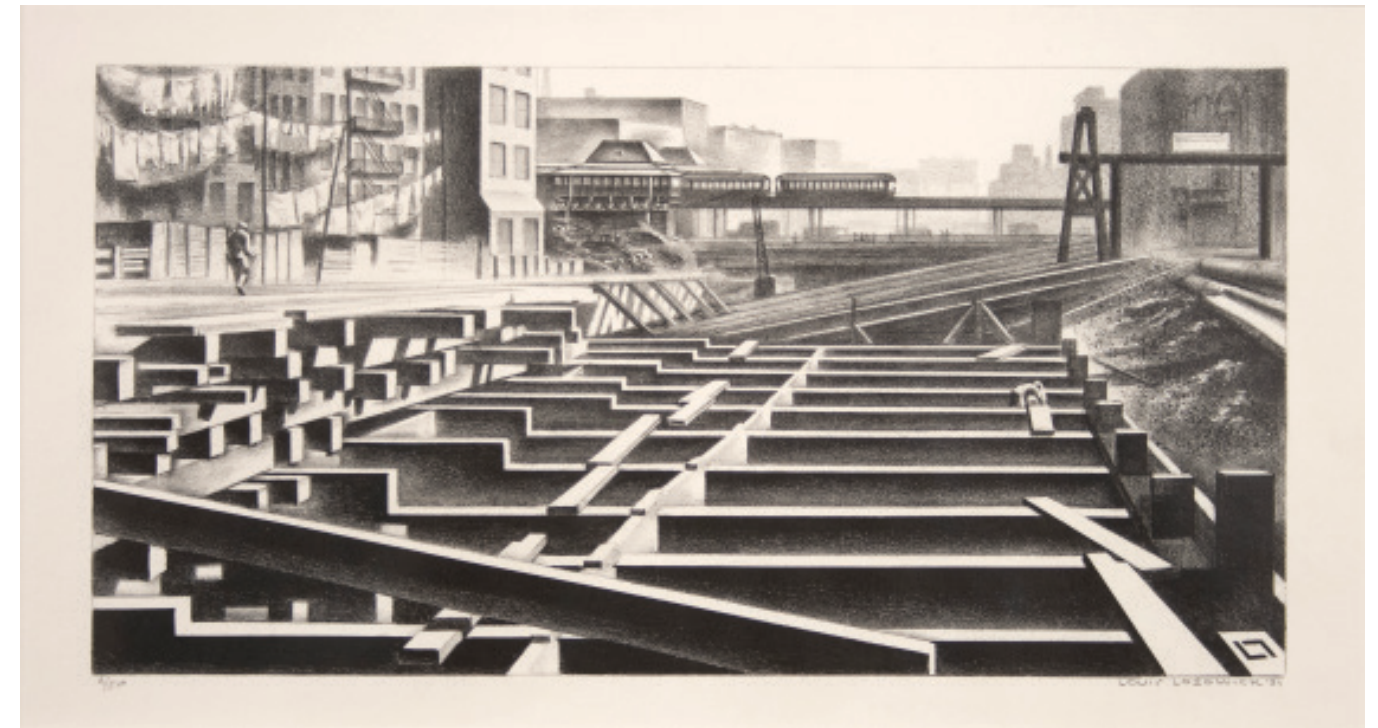
During the Great Depression, Lozowick became a muralist for the Public Works Art Project, painting his optimistic images onto city walls. Also during this period, the aesthetic of Constructivism captured Lozowick's imagination spawning a series of drawings of machine ornaments, and he toured the country extensively making lithographs inspired by his travels including a 1932 lithograph of the Grand Canyon.

Returning to New York from Berlin in 1924, Lozowick found a city transformed by machinery, which reinvigorated his love for the American cityscape. Lozowick's lithographs of this period feature geometrically designed scenes of New York with a focus on imagery of trains and industrial machinery. The high quality of his work and distinctly American subjects won him critical acclaim when they appeared in the Machine-Age Exposition of 1927, the first ever event designed to bring together architecture, engineering, industrial arts and modern art presented in New York.

When earlier in his career his work presented the promise of industrial machinery, following the stock market crash of 1929 Lozowick's lithographs became more attentive to the laborers who maintained and constructed the city. Lozowick's meticulously rendered prints of this period, including *Subway Construction*, created in 1931, are today the images for which he is best known.

In *The Prints of Louis Lozowick: A Catalogue Raisonné*, author Janet Flint remarks:

A beautifully articulated synthesis of strong personal visions and an extraordinary command of black-and-white lithography remained constant. His prints have withstood the inevitable fluctuations of fashion and taste, and today are deservedly appreciated by both connoisseurs and a new generation as among the finest created in twentieth-century America.



LOUIS LOZOWICK

Subway Construction, 1931

lithograph

6 ½ x 13 inches

Edition 4/50

Monogram lower right

signed and dated in graphite lower right

“Louis Lozowick ‘31”

numbered lower left “4/50”

Catalogue Raisonné no. 86

Provenance

The Artist

Forum Gallery, New York



Bernard Perlin

(1918–2014)

Born in Richmond, Virginia in 1918 to Russian Jewish immigrants, American artist Bernard Perlin was a painter, illustrator, and war artist-correspondent whose works expressed the horrors of WWII, issues of social justice, and homosexuality with conviction and bravery.

Early in his career, Perlin lent his artistic talent to the creation of American wartime propaganda and illustration, going on to create throughout his lifetime a body of work that gravitated from social realism to magic realism with subjects as varied as graphic wartime recollections, sensuous male nudes, evocative New York scenes, and works implicit with social comment concerning the plight of minority groups and the poor. He led a life that, in his own words, was “a direct path to making art and seeking human connection.”

Perlin was openly gay at a time when there were real risks involved, both socially and physically, and he pursued his art as he pursued his lovers—unapologetically and with great passion and aplomb. He was active in the gay Greenwich Village scene in the 1950s, living in a small room on Jones Street, and at the center of the Paul Cadmus and Jared and Margaret French circle. He befriended artists, musicians, and personalities including Leonard Bernstein, Grace Hartigan, David Hockney, Lincoln Kirstein, Pavel Tchelitchew, and George Tooker, along with literary figures Truman Capote, Gore Vidal, Arthur Laurents, Glenway Wescott, E. M. Forster, Somerset Maugham, Christopher Isherwood, and Tennessee Williams.

In the 1930s, Bernard Perlin was an artist for the Works Project Administration, painting murals for the Treasury Department and the U.S. Maritime Commission. During World War II, he was embedded with American forces in Europe, Asia and the South Pacific as an artist-correspondent for *Life* and *Fortune* magazines creating works he described as “reportage.”

Bernard Perlin's tempera work, *Hospital Corridor* was commissioned by *Fortune* magazine for an article, "What the Doctor Can't Order—But You Can" published in the August 1961 issue. Upon examination, the painting is much more than mere illustration revealing ubiquitous inequities in the hierarchy of the medical world in 1960s America. In this way, Perlin enters his own statement for Civil Rights. Edward Insull was a close friend in Perlin's inner circle and first owner of *Hospital Corridor*.

Perlin embraced and lived his own life in his own way, without apology, to the very end. At age 91, Perlin legally married his longtime partner, Edward Newell, as a "political statement."

Works by Bernard Perlin are represented in many prominent museum collections, such as the Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.; The Museum of Modern Art and Whitney Museum of American Art in New York; Art Institute of Chicago; Pritzker Military Museum & Library in Chicago; and the Tate Modern in London.

In his lifetime, Perlin's work hung in many notable private collections including those of Mrs. Vincent Astor, Mr. and Mrs. John Jay Whitney, Mr. and Mrs. Leonard Bernstein, Harry Hirshhorn, and Lincoln Kirstein.



BERNARD PERLIN

Hospital Corridor, 1961

tempera on board

10 x 20 inches

signed lower left "Bernard Perlin"

Provenance

The Artist

Collection of Edward Insull

Private Collection, Australia



Winfred Rembert

(1945–2021)

Winfred Rembert was born in 1945 in Americus, Georgia. Brought up by his great aunt “Mama,” Rembert spent his childhood as a fieldworker during the Jim Crow era of the American South. Influenced by the burgeoning Civil Rights Movement as a teenager, Rembert attended a peaceful protest in 1965 and was attacked by white antagonists. He fled the assailants by stealing a car, leading to his arrest for theft. Rembert spent two years incarcerated while awaiting charges before escaping from jail in 1967. He was caught, placed in the trunk of a police car and released to an angry white mob. Surviving the ensuing near-lynching, Rembert was thrown in jail for the next seven years of his life.

After transferring through three penitentiaries within the Georgia prison system, Rembert was moved to chain gang labor in Morgan, Georgia. The conditions the prisoners faced were brutal and unrelenting from the heat of the Georgia summers to the freezing winters. It was hard labor that broke a person down mentally and physically. The inhumane cruelty of the guards humbled the prisoners who were subjected to psychological torture that, to Rembert, was worse than the physical torment.

Rembert learned how to tool and craft leather from a fellow prisoner, a technique he would use to share his harrowing story with the world. Following his release from prison in 1974, Rembert married Patsy Gammage and the couple eventually settled in New Haven, Connecticut where they raised a family.

At the age of fifty-one, with his wife’s encouragement, Rembert began a full-time artistic practice. Combining his mastery of leather working with his skilled draftsmanship, he created an extraordinary body of autobiographical paintings chronicling Black life of the Jim Crow south through pictorial landscapes of cotton fields and Black neighborhoods, and rhythmic compositions featuring field workers, freedom marches, juke joints, and prison life. Rembert’s works are remarkably joyous, emerging from the strength of strong family and community bonds, cultural vibrancy and the many colorful characters who lifted the spirits of those who had little choice but to labor in the region’s cotton and peanut fields.

His works depicting the chain gangs, including *The Chain Gang in the Ditch*, are among Rembert's most powerful expressions. His textural tooling of the leather with brilliant and intuitive use of cadenced patterns and intense color conjures both human hardship and a sense of optimism for the future, identified by brave moments of good humor.

Rembert continued to make art for nearly twenty-five years, before his death in 2021 at the age of seventy-five. His works can be found in the collections of numerous museums including Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, AR; Georgia Museum of Art, University of Georgia, Athens, GA; High Museum of Art, Atlanta, GA; Legacy Museum, Equal Justice Initiative, Montgomery, AL; Lucas Museum of Narrative Art, Los Angeles, CA; National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, CT; and Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, CT.

In addition to his pictorial narratives in leather, Rembert recalled his life in an autobiography penned by Erin I. Kelly, *Chasing Me to My Grave: An Artist's Memoir of the Jim Crow South*. Published in 2021, Rembert was posthumously awarded the 2022 Pulitzer Prize in Biography.

WINFRED REMBERT

The Chain Gang in the Ditch, 2005

dye on carved and tooled leather

40 x 28 inches

signed lower right "Winfred Rembert"

Provenance

The Artist

Private Collection, Rye, New York



In the Pulitzer Prize winning autobiography *Chasing Me to My Grave: An Artist's Memoir of the Jim Crow South*, Winfred Rembert describes the lively nightclubs on Hamilton Avenue in Cuthbert, Georgia, where a thirteen-year-old Winfred found himself homeless after running away from the cotton fields in which he had labored since the age of five. His new friend “Duck” introduced the young Winfred to the owner of a poolroom, who offered him work and shelter. Rembert recalled:

(Duck) took me to all the juke joints and introduced me to the people—all the Black people who were prospering in Cuthbert. They all had something to do with Hamilton Avenue...It was a place for Black people. Everything on Hamilton Avenue was Black...and I never knew Black folks could have businesses... The Dirty Spoon Cafe was the juke joint for adults. They wouldn't let kids in there. I guess they kept more rules and regulations than anybody else. I would look in the window, though, to see all the people in their fancy dress. The best dressed person was a man called 'Egg.' He would wear three-piece suits with the vest over the sleeves...Egg was an excellent dancer. He was disabled, but he could dance. He used to swing those girls, and I was standing there in the window looking at him do it... The Dirty Spoon Cafe was the place you could see that kind of dancing.¹

¹ Rembert, Winfred and Erin I. Kelly. *Chasing Me to My Grave: An Artist's Memoir of the Jim Crow South*, Bloomsbury Publishing Inc., New York, NY, 2021, pp. 45-46.



WINFRED REMBERT

Untitled (The Dirty Spoon Café), 2011
dye on carved and tooled leather
10 1/16 x 15 5/8 inches
signed upper right “Winfred Rembert”

Provenance

The Artist
Private Collection, Connecticut
Merrill C. Berman Collection, Rye, New York

Living on a cotton plantation in Georgia with his family as a child, Winfred Rembert received almost no schooling. Winfred Rembert recalled:

I managed to go to school one or two times a week. I had to walk there, and it was four miles away. One day the plantation owner came and told Mama, 'Lillian, it's time for him to start picking cotton. He don't need to go to no school. He need to learn how to work and plow the mule.' Mama said, "Yes, sir," because she was intimidated by White People. The White folks were really holding her in place. Later, when she got off the plantation and moved into town, her attitude changed a little bit. She wasn't as afraid as she had been, and she could speak out on things, like about how Black people could get out of the slavery-like situation of Jim Crow by going to college...

After that I didn't go to school so much. And when I did go, I was so far behind, I didn't know a thing. Still, I tried to learn. I had a teacher named Miss Prather. She felt my need. Miss Prather was the greatest. "Winfred, you're just the greatest artist. And I want you to do my bulletin board. I want you to draw a picture of every kid in the class. She knew I could draw because when she was walking around in class teaching, and everybody was doing their work, I was drawing...because I wasn't learning. I had nothing else to do. I didn't know what she was talking about. So I would just sit there and draw...Sometimes she asked me to put wood in the stove, to give me something to do. She never embarrassed me... Miss Prather tried to teach me things, but I couldn't hold it. I was too far behind. I just couldn't learn it.

Winfred Rembert and Class of 1959, was acquired by Donald & Patricia Oresman of New York. Patricia Oresman was a social worker who studied Emily Dickinson and Donald Oresman was a lawyer and businessman who also sat on the boards of the Library Company in Philadelphia, the Larchmont Library, the Morgan Library and the New Criterion. About their impressive 550-piece art collection, *The New York Times* wrote that the Oresman's lives were devoted to literature and art and that, "each work of art depicted the quiet solitude of reading."



WINFRED REMBERT

Winfred Rembert and Class of 1959, 1999
dye on carved and tooled leather
22 ½ x 32 ½ inches
signed and titled middle right
"Winfred Rembert and / Class of 1959"

Provenance

The Artist
M. Lee Stone Fine Prints, San Jose, California
Patricia and Donald Oresman Collection, New York
Private Collection, Michigan
Private Collection, Rye New York

Winfred Rembert tells the story when he was about thirteen years old and ran away from home. He left his Mama and the cotton fields for an area of downtown Cuthbert, Georgia known as Hamilton Avenue. Winfred was young and alone, often sleeping in the cemetery, recalled Rembert. “If you have nowhere to go and nowhere to sleep, sleeping on a headstone is a good sleep,” recalled Rembert.

During this time Rembert made friends with a kid his age called “Duck” who brought him to the places on Hamilton Avenue. It was here that he was introduced to Jeff, the owner of Jeff’s Café & Pool Room and Zeb’s Shoe Shine down the street. Jeff took to Winfred right away and offered him work running the poolroom and a bed to sleep in.

Rembert described his newly found employment away from the hard labor of the fields:

Back on Hamilton Avenue, down the street from his pool hall, Jeff also owned a shoeshine parlor, which was very good. I used to go in there and shine. We had a good business of shining shoes, and Jeff would give you a percentage of what you made. On Sunday Morning, people would get their shoes shined because they were going to church. Having your shoes shined on Sunday morning, in Jeff’s shoeshine parlor, was a big thing in Cuthbert, Georgia.

One Sunday morning this White man came in and kicked this Black guy all over the place...and the Black man didn’t fight back...The White man kicked and beat the Black man all the way out of the shoeshine parlor, and even though the place was packed with Blacks, not one person helped him.”

Incidences like this were common and particularly frustrating for Winfred as a youth. The feeling of helplessness in witnessing such an event stuck with him:

I carried that with me...I learned: stay in your place and you’re safer. You won’t get into trouble. I’d like to think some of the older guys should have helped him, but when you jump into something like that, you have to think about the aftermath...Would the White man go and get a lot more White Folks and come back and tear up the place?...White folks did whatever they wanted to do. People looked at you as if you were nothing.



WINFRED REMBERT

Jeff’s Café & Pool Room and Zeb’s Shoe Shine, 1998
 dye on carved and tooled leather
 22 x 28 inches
 signed middle right “Winfred Rembert”

Provenance

The Artist
 M. Lee Stone Fine Prints, San Jose, California
 Private Collection, Michigan
 Private Collection, Rye New York



Ben Shahn

(1898–1969)

A young Jewish immigrant from Lithuania, Ben Shahn arrived with his family in Brooklyn at the age of eight. Between 1919 and 1922 he studied at New York University; the City College of New York; and the National Academy of Design. Sharing a studio in 1929 with photographer Walker Evans stimulated Shahn's own interest in photography and he began photographing people and street scenes, first in New York and later around the country. These photographs served as the basis for many of his prints and paintings.

In the 1930s, Shahn submitted and executed mural proposals for the Public Works of Art Project, and he joined the Resettlement Administration in 1935 to document desperate conditions in the rural South while continuing his own work as an artist, designer and photographer. Shahn briefly joined the Office of War Information (OWI) in 1942 to design posters and pamphlets, and later in 1945 he worked for the Political Action Committee of the Congress of Industrial Organizations to help re-elect Franklin D. Roosevelt, serving as the CIO director of Graphic Arts.

Shahn's art is one of protest against injustice and prejudice. He is recognized as one of the leading social realists of the Twentieth Century whose art consistently displayed great empathy for those affected by social and criminal injustices.

Ben Shahn was deeply affected by the conflicts of World War II and created many war-themed paintings in the 1940s that tell stories of desolation and loneliness. Created in 1945, his art's anti-war sentiment is reflected in *Death on the Beach*, which is related to a large-scale tempera work created by the artist the same year titled *Pacific Landscape* in the Collection of The Museum of Modern Art. Both paintings depict haunting scenes of a lifeless soldier lying face down on a dune of small white stones, each painted painstakingly one by one.

Ben Shahn himself noted how several of his paintings from the mid-1940s expressed a new mode of perception. Shahn wrote that these works had become “much more private and more inward-looking. A symbolism which I might once have considered cryptic now became the only means by which I could formulate the sense of emptiness and waste that the war gave me, and the sense of the littleness of people trying to live on through the enormity of war.”¹

For the Abrams monograph, *Ben Shahn*, published in 1972, Ben Shahn's wife, Bernarda Bryson Shahn, writes about the sheer visual impact of his wartime works:

...it is emotional content, an outcry against war...all these impacted feelings are innate in the image. Recognition, the sense of desolation, precedes any words that might arise to describe it. The words follow or are not necessary at all.

Widely exhibited, *Death on the Beach* was selected for inclusion in *Ben Shahn*, a retrospective exhibition organized by The Museum of Modern Art, New York, in 1948, curated by James Thrall Soby. *Death on the Beach* was presented in a second retrospective exhibition for Shahn presented by The Fogg Art Museum of Harvard in 1957. In 1962 Soby organized an exhibition of Shahn's work, including *Death on the Beach*, that was presented at four European museums—Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam; Palais Des Beaux-Arts, Brussels; Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna, Rome; and Graphische Sammlung Albertina, Vienna.

¹ Polcari, Stephen. Essay, “Ben Shahn and Postwar American Art,” in *Common Man Mythic Vision: The Paintings of Ben Shahn*, The Jewish Museum, 1999, p. 71-72.



BEN SHAHN

Death on the Beach, 1945

tempera on board

9 ½ x 13 ¾ inches

signed upper right “Ben Shahn”

Provenance

The Artist

(The Downtown Gallery, New York)

Sidney and Rosalie Berkowitz, New York

(acquired from the above, June 20, 1945)

Private Collection (by descent)

Private Collection, Australia



Raphael Soyer

(1899–1987)

Raphael Soyer was born on Christmas Day in 1899 in Tombov, Russia. With his family, Raphael traveled to the United States and settled in Manhattan at the impressionable age of twelve years old. Although they had to leave high school to contribute to the family income, Raphael and his twin brother, Moses, enrolled in drawing lessons at Cooper Union in 1914. Four years later, Raphael enrolled in the National Academy of Design and afterwards, studied with Guy Pene du Bois at the Art Students League. Du Bois encouraged him to be himself and paint what he knew, his family and environment. Raphael Soyer took this to heart, rejecting the strict academic style of the time for a more personal style.

With the endorsement of Du Bois, Soyer brought his paintings to the Daniel Gallery, and soon had his first solo exhibition there in 1929, the year of the stock market crash. Incredibly, some sales were made, and the exhibition was reviewed favorably. During this year, Soyer made the commitment to give up his day job, rent a studio on the Lower East Side, and paint full-time.

Raphael Soyer's Depression-era depictions of the working class and dispossessed, culminating in his mature and heartfelt observations of friends, family and models, have led his contribution to be regarded as a vital and irreplaceable component of American figurative art in the Twentieth Century. By the time of his death in New York in 1987, he had become one of this country's best-known and beloved painters, described in his *New York Times* obituary as the "dean of American realists."

Raphael Soyer's *Back Stage* is a masterpiece of social realist painting created in 1935, an important time in the Artist's career when, in response to the impacts of the Great Depression, Soyer turned his observation to the diverse milieu of urban life in challenging times, from the vagrants languishing in Union Square to the working women, shoppers, shopgirls and theater performers.

A recurring figure in these works was Walter Broe, an out-of-work businessman who was a frequent model of the Fourteenth Street artists during the Depression. In *Back Stage*, Soyer portrays Broe as a stage doorman resting on a tilted chair, his character serving to spotlight the essential difference between the "just another day" attitude of the trades-workers of the time and the Arts symbolized by the essential optimism of the central figure with her fanciful Pierrot costume and gentle smile, an actor whose goal is to provide relief and an escape for her audience through the joy of performance.

Back Stage was included in *Raphael Soyer*, a retrospective exhibition presented by the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York in 1967, and that traveled to the Ackland Art Museum, Chapel Hill, NC; High Museum of Art, Atlanta, GA; California Palace of the Legion of Honor, San Francisco, CA; Columbus Gallery of Fine Arts, OH; Minneapolis Institute of Arts, MN; and the Des Moines Art Center, IA.



RAPHAEL SOYER

Back Stage, 1935

oil on canvas

28 ¼ x 26 ¼ inches

signed lower right "Raphael Soyer"

Provenance

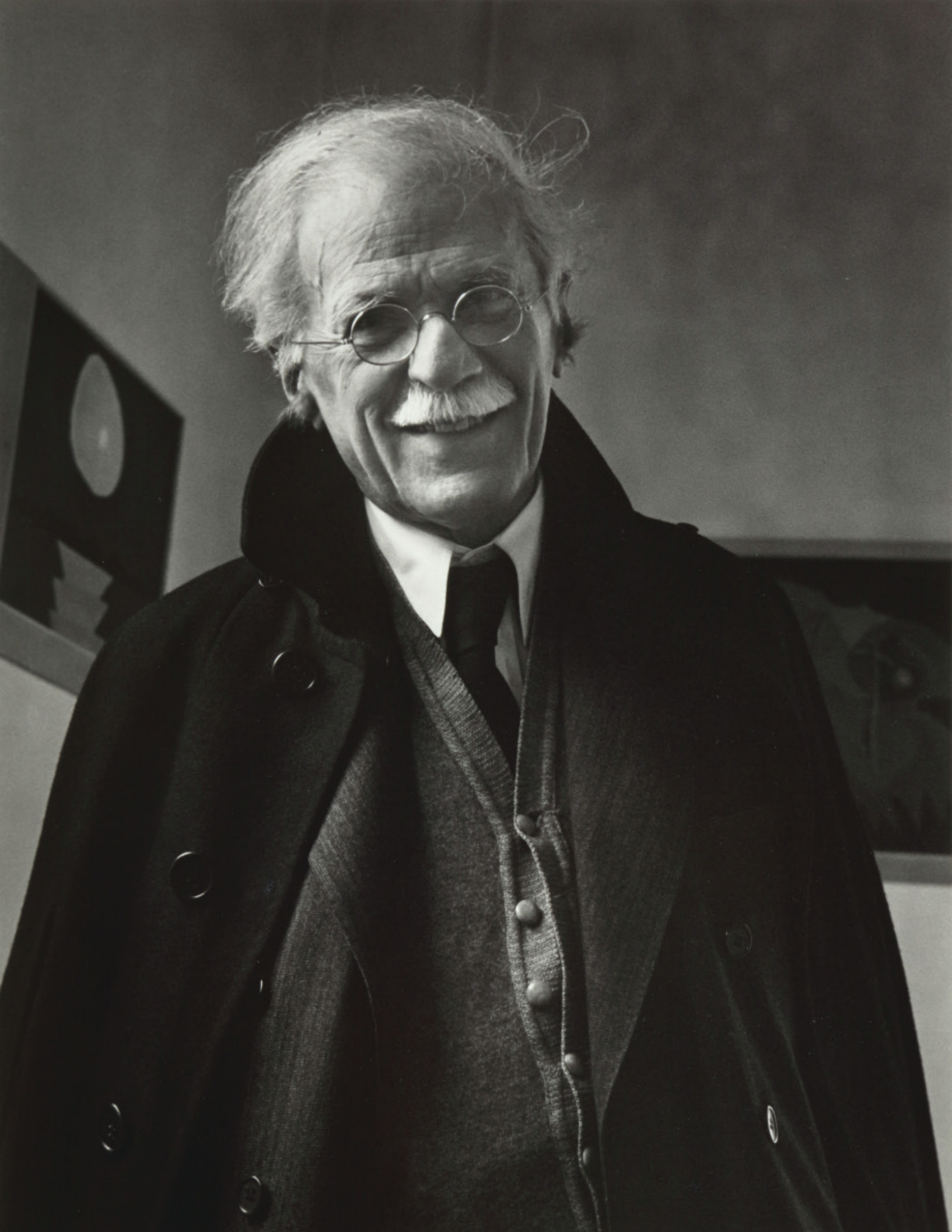
The Artist

Collection of Emil J. Arnold

Private Collection, Amsterdam, New York

(since 1974, acquired directly from the above)

Forum Gallery, New York (since 2022)



Alfred Stieglitz

(1864–1946)

American artist Alfred Stieglitz was born in Hoboken, New Jersey, in 1864. Schooled as an engineer in Germany, he returned to New York in 1890 determined to prove that photography was a medium as capable of artistic expression as painting or sculpture. As the editor of *Camera Notes*, the journal of an association of amateur photography enthusiasts called the Camera Club of New York, Stieglitz espoused his belief in the aesthetic potential of the medium and published work by photographers who shared his conviction. Stieglitz and several like-minded photographers broke away from the group in 1902 to form the Photo-Secession, advocating for an emphasis on the craftsmanship involved in photography. Stieglitz took great care in producing his prints, often making platinum prints, a process renowned for yielding images with a rich, subtly varied tonal scale. And together with his compositional choices—including the use of natural elements like rain, snow, and steam to unify the components of a scene into a visually pleasing pictorial whole—Stieglitz became acclaimed for achieving the affiliation with painting he desired.

In 1902, Stieglitz devoted his energies toward the production of an autonomous, high-quality magazine intended to elevate and promote the art of photography. *Camera Work* was the result and from 1903 to 1917 Stieglitz edited the sumptuous journal while simultaneously organizing exhibitions with the aid of Edward J. Steichen whose donated studio space became the Little Galleries of the Photo-Secession in 1905, familiarly known as “291” for its address on Fifth Avenue. Through these enterprises, Stieglitz supported photographers and other modern American artists, while also apprising artists of the latest developments in early Twentieth Century European modernism with the help of Steichen’s frequent reports from Paris. Stieglitz’s knowledge of this new kind of art is evident in photographs from these years such as *The Steerage*, in which the arrangement of shapes and tones belies his familiarity with Cubism.

For many, *The Steerage*, is considered the first modernist photograph. It was taken by Stieglitz while sailing from New York to Germany on the Kaiser Wilhelm II for a vacation in 1907. The photograph marks Stieglitz's eschewal of Symbolist subject matter for that of everyday life—an image of steerage, the lowest priced quarters on the ship where passengers traveled in harsh conditions. The focus on passengers returning to Europe (some perhaps as a result of unsuccessful attempts to immigrate) inevitably lends the photograph a political charge, but the compositional harmony of *The Steerage* is remarkable for its improbable circumstances of its creation.

The artist narrated that he had only one chance to get the image right, because he was carrying just a single unexposed plate: “Could I catch what I saw and felt? I released the shutter, my heart thumping. If I had captured what I wanted, the photograph would go far beyond any of my previous prints.”



ALFRED STIEGLITZ

The Steerage, 1907 (printed in 1911)

photogravure

7 ½ x 6 inches

Provenance

Private Collection, New York

FORUM GALLERY
475 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10022
(212) 355-4545
gallery@forumgallery.com
www.forumgallery.com



FORUM
GALLERY